

FIELD-INITIATED EVALUATIONS OF EDUCATION INNOVATIONS

CFDA NUMBER: 84.305 F

RELEASE DATE: August 6, 2004

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS: NCEE-05-01

Institute of Education Sciences

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/edresearch/applicant.html>

LETTER OF INTENT RECEIPT DATE: October 15, 2004

APPLICATION RECEIPT DATE: December 16, 2004

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1. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) invites applications for field-initiated evaluations of promising education interventions designed to improve academic outcomes (e.g., student achievement, high school graduation, grades) and other student behaviors that have a direct impact on academic outcomes (e.g., attendance, drug use, conduct, education plans and aspirations, course taking, studying). Interventions are programs, products, practices, or policies that can be adopted by multiple schools and districts. For this competition, the Institute will

consider only applications that meet the requirements outlined below under the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research.

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Institute intends for the research program on Field-Initiated Evaluations to establish the efficacy of existing education interventions that are used in schools and other education delivery settings. The intent of this competition is to provide federal support for evaluations of the effectiveness of education interventions that are being used in the field, that appear promising based on student performance or fill an unmet need, but that have not benefited from a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness. Many such interventions are developed by education providers such as school districts or by small businesses or non-profit groups that are not well-equipped to plan or carry out rigorous evaluations. This research program is intended to fill a gap in federal funding between the evaluation of federal education programs on the one hand, and research and development that is carried out in the academic and university sector on the other hand. The Institute believes that much potentially valuable innovation also occurs in the practice community. The Institute intends this research program to document the effectiveness of some of those innovations so as to promote wider and more confident adoption of successful innovations and abandonment or improvement of those that are not producing the intended results. The long-term outcome of this program will be to expand the body of scientific evidence on the effectiveness of a wide range of education interventions that intend to significantly improve student achievement.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Institute conducted a survey of a purposive sample of education practitioners and decision-makers to determine what research they think needs to be conducted to improve education in the United States (Institute of Education Sciences, 2003). The sample included school superintendents and principals, chief state school officers, and legislative policy-makers. They indicated that they need answers to practical questions, such as: how to structure a teacher induction program to enhance retention and teacher performance; which of the commercially available mathematics curriculum are effective in enhancing student learning; how to design an assessment and accountability system so that negative effects are minimized; and how they can structure teacher compensation to attract and retain the best and the brightest. At the heart of their questions is the desire to find out what works to improve the learning environment and, in turn, student learning.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* requires that state and local education agencies use scientifically based research to guide their decisions about which education interventions to adopt when those interventions are purchased with federal funds. However school superintendents, principals, and teachers often do not have the information they need to make sound decisions that will improve instruction and raise student achievement. For many aspects of education the research evidence on the effectiveness of programs and policies is weak, inconsistent, or nonexistent. Under such conditions, education decision-makers use the best available information and their professional wisdom to select or develop programs to be implemented in their schools. How will they know if the programs worked in their schools? As districts and schools implement interventions, they often lack the resources and expertise to launch a rigorous evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation grant program is to provide

additional resources to enable education providers to conduct evaluations of programs they are about to implement or have implemented in their schools.

Randomized controlled trials provide the strongest evidence on the impact of a particular intervention. Through this competition, the Institute encourages education providers to utilize randomized controlled trials to determine whether or not new or existing programs improve student outcomes. How might a district employ such a strategy in the context of the Institute's Field Initiated Evaluation program? Here is one example. Working with a university-based expert, one elementary school within a high-poverty district has developed and implemented a remedial reading program for third grade students who are struggling readers. The reading program provides four short sessions of pullout instruction per week for students identified as reading below basic levels. Based on a glowing report from the principal on the effectiveness of this program, the district is considering expanding this program to many more of its elementary schools. However there are significant costs involved in terms of training and release time for teachers. The district has decided to test the program in five of its 20 elementary schools in the district before expanding it to all of its schools. In these five schools, a randomized controlled trial could be conducted in which each school would identify 20 students in third grade identified as reading below basic levels. A lottery would be conducted in which half of the 20 students in each school would be selected to participate in the program. Student performance of the 50 (10 students from each of the 5 schools) students participating in the remedial reading program would be compared to the 50 students not selected for the program. Based on the outcome of the evaluation, the district would have much better information for determining whether the remedial reading program is worth adopting. If the program proves effective, it could be a candidate for wider use and further evaluation.

4. REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

For the FY 2005 Field-Initiated Evaluation competition, applicants must submit a proposal that is responsive to the requirements listed below. Because this research program is focused on providers and developers of education interventions who may not be well equipped to conduct rigorous evaluations, the Institute strongly encourages those providers and developers to form partnerships with research and evaluation teams who have the capacity to design and carry out rigorous evaluations. Either the education provider/developer or the research/evaluation team may be the applicant of record, but the Institute expects the entity that is providing or has developed the education intervention to play a significant role in applying for research funding and in implementing the intervention. To help education providers or developers assess the capabilities of potential evaluation partners, the Institute has a guide to understanding evidence based education, which is available at <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousetid/index.html>. The guide provides basic information on randomized controlled trials and other types of evaluations, which may be useful as education providers and developers assess the types of evaluations that potential evaluation partners have conducted previously. Individuals might also check relevant information on the standards for evaluating evidence that are employed by the Institute's What Works Clearinghouse (<http://whatworks.ed.gov>).

Note, the Institute does not intend to review the same application under multiple FY 2005 competitions. Applicants should review all of the Institute's FY 2005 Requests for Applications

to determine which competition is most appropriate for their application (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/edresearch/applicant.html>).

Requirements for the proposed intervention. The purpose of an efficacy trial is to rigorously test a promising intervention within a small number of education settings (e.g., classrooms or schools). Applicants must propose to evaluate an education intervention that has already been developed and implemented in an education delivery setting. Interventions appropriate for study are interventions that are fully developed, deployed in an education setting, replicable, and for which a strong case can be made that knowing the efficacy of the intervention would have important implications for practice and policy. For example, a school district has implemented a cross-age tutoring program in which talented high school students are taught how to deliver structured reading tutoring to elementary school students. Materials and protocols have been developed that would support the dissemination of the program to other schools and districts, and the program is promising as indicated by a good track record of implementation and rising scores for tutored students. This could be a very cost-effective method of providing struggling readers with individualized feedback and instruction, but in the absence of a rigorous evaluation there is insufficient evidence to warrant wider adoption.

The proposed evaluation may focus on any pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 education intervention that is designed to improve academic outcomes (e.g., achievement test scores, grades, drop-out rates, college access) and other student behaviors directly related to academic outcomes (e.g., attendance, conduct). As stated above, the term “intervention” covers a wide range of programs, products, practices, or policies in education.

The intervention should be clearly described, including the subject matter, the grade levels or ages of the students to be targeted, the types of students to be affected, the setting in which it will be delivered, the duration, the intensity (hours or days per week), the numbers and qualifications of the teachers and other staff who will be involved, and the student outcomes that are targeted. The application must also include a detailed plan for implementation of the intervention and a detailed plan for funding of the implementation.

Methodological Requirements. The purpose of this program is to evaluate the efficacy of interventions. By *efficacy*, the Institute means the degree to which an intervention has a net positive impact on the outcomes of interest in relation to the program or practice to which it is being compared. From the Institute's standpoint, a funded project would be methodologically successful if at the end of the grant period, the investigators had rigorously evaluated the impact of a clearly specified intervention on relevant student outcomes and under clearly described conditions using a research design that meets the Institute's What Works Clearinghouse Level 1 (i.e., meets standards) study criteria (<http://whatworks.ed.gov>). Further, the Institute would consider methodologically successful projects to be pragmatically successful if the rigorous evaluation determined that the intervention has a net positive impact on student outcomes in relation to the program or practice to which it is being compared.

Because these evaluations focus on identifying the causal effects of education interventions, studies in which the target of the intervention (e.g., schools, teachers, or students) is randomly assigned to treatment and control conditions are strongly preferred. When a randomized trial is

used, the applicant should clearly state the unit of randomization (e.g., student, classroom, teacher, or school) and the rationale for using that unit of randomization. Applicants should explain the procedures for assignment of schools, classrooms, or participants to treatment and control conditions. Applicants should demonstrate how they intend to assess the fidelity of implementation of the intervention and strategies used to avoid contamination. A clear and complete description should be provided for both the treatment and control conditions.

A high-quality quasi-experimental design may be used *only in circumstances in which a randomized trial is not possible*. Applicants proposing to use a high-quality quasi-experimental design must make a compelling case that randomization is not possible. A well-designed quasi-experiment is one that reduces substantially the potential influence of selection bias on membership in the intervention or comparison group. Therefore, applicants proposing quasi-experimental designs must describe in detail the procedures to be used that will result in substantially minimizing the effects of selection bias on estimates of effect size. This requires demonstrating equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry on the variables that are to be measured as program outcomes (e.g., achievement test scores), or obtaining such equivalence through statistical procedures such as propensity score balancing or regression. It also involves demonstrating equivalence or removing statistically the effects of other variables on which the groups may differ and that may affect intended outcomes of the program being evaluated (e.g., demographic variables, experience and level of training of teachers, motivation of parents or students). Finally, it involves a design in which the initial selection of the intervention and comparison groups minimizes selection bias or allows it to be modeled.

Examples of high-quality quasi-experimental designs include regression-discontinuity designs and cases in which naturally occurring circumstances or institutions (perhaps unintentionally) divide people into treatment and comparison groups in a manner akin to purposeful random assignment. An example of a very weak quasi-experimental design would be an evaluation in which the intervention condition is populated with students who volunteered for the program to be evaluated, and would select comparison students who had declined the opportunity to participate. In this case, self-selection into the intervention is very likely to reflect motivation and other factors that will affect outcomes of interest and that will be impossible to equate across the two groups.

The applicant must list the school districts and schools or other education settings that have agreed to participate in the study, and explain, as completely as possible, how students, teachers, and/or classrooms will be selected to participate in the proposed study. Additionally, the applicant should show how the long-term participation of respondents will be maximized, and propose strategies to minimize attrition. The applicant must supply information on the reliability, validity, and appropriateness of proposed measures. The proposal should either indicate how the intervention will be maintained consistently across multiple classrooms and schools over time or describe the parameters under which variations in the intervention will be permitted.

All proposals should provide detailed descriptions of data analysis procedures. For quantitative data, specific statistical procedures should be cited. For qualitative data, the specific methods used to index, summarize, and interpret data should be delineated.

The application must include a power analysis that demonstrates that the proposed sample size has the power to detect statistically and substantively meaningful effect sizes for improvements in academic achievement. The discussion of the power analysis must specify whether one-tail or two-tail tests are used, and what level of significance is used.

Finally, an important distinction between projects funded under this competition and projects funded under the Institute's other research grant competitions is in the emphasis on the theoretical and conceptual basis of the intervention and the reasons it does or does not work. For example, if lesson study is shown through a rigorous impact evaluation to produce better student learning than business as usual in a district's schools, the superintendent of that district and instructional leaders in similar districts have good reason to consider implementing lesson study. Understanding and examining the theoretical reasons why lesson study works is not a priority for the superintendent. Thus, for the Field Initiated Evaluation competition, the Institute does not require that applicants provide evidence that the intervention is based on prior research or theory, and does not require research designs that can reveal the process by which an intervention produces effects, though neither is discouraged. If through rigorous field initiated evaluations, certain programs are found to be effective, the Institute can conduct subsequent research to better understand why they work.

Applicants may choose to include observational, survey, or qualitative methodologies as a complement to experimental methodologies to assist in the identification of factors that may affect the implementation of the intervention and to provide clues as to how the intervention might be deployed more effectively and efficiently in the future. Applicants may choose to measure mediating and moderating variables for both the intervention and comparison conditions groups (e.g., student time-on-task, teacher experience/time in position). However, as suggested in the previous paragraph, such methods are not a requirement of this program.

Personnel and resources. Applicants must demonstrate that their research teams collectively have the skills and experience in randomized trials (or high-quality quasi-experimental studies for applicants that propose to use that methodology); expertise in the subject area of the approach or intervention; expertise in statistical analysis; and skill and experience working with teachers, schools, and districts.

As noted above partnerships among education providers (e.g., districts), curriculum or software developers, and researchers are strongly encouraged. However, applicants must demonstrate that the involvement of the curriculum developer or distributor will not jeopardize the objectivity of the evaluation.

When applicants are not the entities that will be delivering the intervention (e.g., curriculum or software developers), applicants are required to document the availability and cooperation of the schools or other education delivery settings that will be required to carry out the research proposed in the application via a letter of cooperation from the education organization(s). The

letter of cooperation should clearly indicate and accept the responsibilities associated with participating in the study, including an agreement to provide a sufficient number of sites, schools, classrooms, and/or students to participate in the study and, in the case of random assignment, an agreement to the random assignment of students, classrooms, schools, or sites to the intervention or the control approach. Cooperative arrangements can also be documented through a group application, as described below in the section on eligible applicants.

Awards. Typical awards will be \$200,000 to \$500,000 (total cost) per year for up to 3 years. Applicants may request larger awards and longer periods of funding when either or both are required for a meaningful evaluation. Such requests must be carefully and fully justified in the application narrative. The size of the award depends on the scope of the project.

The Field-Initiated Evaluation grants are to be used for the cost of the evaluation and are not to be used to support the development of new interventions. The grants may be used to fund all or some of the cost of implementation, including training teachers or staff and buying materials. In addition, grants may be used for materials and activities that will support dissemination of the intervention (e.g., how-to guides, training manuals). Funding for implementation and dissemination is not to exceed 30 percent of the total value of the grant.

5. APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Application forms and instructions for the electronic submission of applications will be available for this program of research after November 4, 2004, from the following web site:

<http://ies.constellagroup.com>

6. MECHANISM OF SUPPORT

The Institute expects to award grants for periods up to 3 years pursuant to this request for applications. Please see specific details in the Requirements of the Proposed Research section of the announcement.

7. FUNDING AVAILABLE

The size of the award depends on the scope of the project. Please see specific details in the Requirements of the Proposed Research section of the announcement. Although the plans of the Institute include this program of research, awards pursuant to this request for applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications. The number of projects funded depends upon the number of high quality applications submitted to this competition.

8. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants that have the ability and capacity to carry out scientifically valid evaluations and to implement the interventions to be evaluated are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions. If a group of eligible parties applies, the members of the group shall designate one member of the group to apply for the grant, and shall enter into an agreement that details the

activities that each member of the group plans to perform, and that binds each member of the group to every statement and assurance made by the applicant in the application. The applicant shall submit the agreement with its application.

9. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Research supported through this program must be relevant to U.S. schools. Recipients of awards are expected to publish or otherwise make publicly available the results of the work supported through this program.

Applicants should budget for one meeting each year in Washington, DC, with other grantees and Institute staff. At least one project representative should attend the two-day meeting.

The Institute anticipates that the majority of the research will be conducted in field settings. Hence, if the applicant is a college or university, the applicant is reminded to apply its negotiated off-campus indirect cost rate, as directed by the terms of the applicant's negotiated agreement.

Applicants may collaborate with, or be, for-profit entities that develop, distribute, or otherwise market products or services that can be used as interventions or components of interventions in the proposed research activities. Involvement of the developer or distributor must not jeopardize the objectivity of the evaluation. Applications from or collaborations including such organizations should justify the need for Federal assistance to undertake the evaluation of programs that are marketed to consumers and consider cost-sharing part of the cost of the evaluation.

10. LETTER OF INTENT

A letter indicating a potential applicant's intent to submit an application is optional, but encouraged, for each application. The letter of intent must be submitted electronically by the date listed at the beginning of this document, using the instructions provided at the following web site:

<http://ies.constellagroup.com>

The letter of intent should include a descriptive title and a brief description of the evaluation project (no longer than one page, single-spaced, using a 12 point font without compression or kerning); the name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the principal investigator(s); and the name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators. The letter of intent should indicate the duration of the proposed project and provide an estimated budget request by year, and a total budget request. Although the letter of intent is optional, is not binding, and does not enter into the review of subsequent applications, the information that it contains allows Institute staff to estimate the potential workload to plan the review.

11. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applications must be submitted **electronically by 8:00 p.m. Eastern time** on the application receipt date, using the ED standard forms and the instructions provided at the following web site:

<http://ies.constellagroup.com>

Application forms and instructions for the electronic submission of applications will be available for this program of research no later than **November 4, 2004**. Potential applicants should check this site for information about the electronic submission procedures that must be followed and the software that will be required.

The application form approved for this program is OMB Number 1890-0009.

12. CONTENTS AND PAGE LIMITS OF APPLICATION

All applications and proposals for Institute funding must be self-contained within specified page limitations. Internet Web site addresses (URLs) may not be used to provide information necessary to the review because reviewers are under no obligation to view the Internet sites.

Sections described below, and summarized in Table 1, represent the body of a proposal submitted to the Institute and should be organized in the order listed below. Sections *a* (ED 424) through *i* (Appendix A) are required parts of the proposal. Section *j* (Appendix B) is optional. All sections must be submitted electronically.

Observe the page number limitations given in Table 1.

Table 1

Section	Page Limit	Additional Information
a. Application for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424)	n/a	
b. Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524)—Sections A and B	n/a	
c. Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524)—Section C	n/a	
d. Project Abstract	1	
e. Evaluation Narrative	20	Figures, charts, tables, and diagrams may be included in Appendix A
f. Reference List	no limit	Complete citations, including titles and all authors
g. Curriculum Vita of Key Personnel	3	No more than 3 pages for each key person
h. Budget Justification	no limit	
i. Appendix A	15	
j. Appendix B	10	

a. *Application for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424)*. The form and instructions are available on the website.

b. *Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524)—Sections A and B*. The application must include a budget for each year of support requested and a cumulative

budget for the full term of requested Institute support. Applicants must provide budget information for each project year using the ED 524 form (a link to the form is provided on the application website at <http://ies.constellagroup.com>). The ED 524 form has three sections: A, B, and C. Instructions for Sections A and B are included on the form.

- c. *Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524)—Section C.* Instructions for ED 524 Section C are as follows. Section C must provide an itemized budget breakdown for each project year, for each budget category listed in Sections A and B. For each person listed in the personnel category, include a listing of percent effort for each project year, as well as the cost. Section C should also include a breakdown of the fees to consultants, a listing of each piece of equipment, itemization of supplies into separate categories, and itemization of travel requests (e.g. travel for data collection, conference travel, etc.) into separate categories. Any other expenses should be itemized by category and unit cost.
- d. *Project abstract.* The abstract is limited to one page and must include: (1) The title of the project; and brief descriptions of (2) the potential contribution the proposed project will make to the solution of an education problem; (3) the population(s) from which the participants of the evaluation will be sampled (age groups, race/ethnicity, SES); (4) the proposed evaluation method(s); and (5) the proposed intervention.
- e. *Evaluation narrative.* Incorporating the requirements outlined under the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research, the *evaluation narrative* provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the proposal and should include the following sections (1 through 4) in the order listed:
 - (1) Contribution of Project to Solving an Education Problem (suggested: 1-2 pages)
Describe the contribution the study will make to providing a solution to an education problem.
 - (2) Evaluation Plan (suggested: 14-17 pages)
 - i. Provide a compelling rationale addressing relevant prior empirical evidence supporting the proposed project and the practical importance of the proposed project.

Include a description of the intervention along with the rationale and any empirical evidence supporting the intervention. (Applicants may use Appendix B to include up to 10 pages of examples of curriculum material, computer screens, or further description of the intervention);
 - ii. Include clear, concise evaluation questions;
 - iii. Present a clear description of, and a rationale for, the sample or study participants, including justification for exclusion and inclusion criteria and, where groups or conditions are involved, strategies for assigning participants to groups;

- iv. Provide clear descriptions of, and rationales for, data collection procedures and measures to be used; and
 - v. Present a detailed data analysis plan that justifies and explains the selected analytic strategy, shows clearly how the measures and analyses relate to the evaluation questions, and indicates how the results will be interpreted. The plan should include a power analysis to provide assurance that the sample is of sufficient size and takes account of possible cluster conditions.
- (3) Personnel (suggested: 1-2 pages)
Include brief descriptions of the qualifications of key personnel (information on personnel should also be provided in their curriculum vitae). For each of the key personnel, please describe the roles, responsibilities, and percent of time devoted to the project.
- (4) Resources (suggested: 1-2 pages)
Provide a description of the resources available to support the project at the applicant's institution and in the field settings in which the evaluation will be conducted.

The evaluation narrative is limited to the equivalent of 20 pages, where a 'page' is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. Single space all text in the evaluation narrative. To ensure that the text is easy for reviewers to read and that all applicants have the same amount of available space in which to describe their projects, applicants must adhere to the type size and format specifications for the entire evaluation narrative including footnotes. See frequently asked questions available at <http://ies.constellagroup.com> on or before November 4, 2004.

Conform to the following four requirements:

- (1) The height of the letters must not be smaller than 12 point;
- (2) Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch (cpi). For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text must not exceed 15 cpi;
- (3) No more than 6 lines of type within a vertical inch;
- (4) Margins, in all directions, must be at least 1 inch.

Applicants should check the type size using a standard device for measuring type size, rather than relying on the font selected for a particular word processing/printer combination. Figures, charts, tables, and figure legends may be smaller in size but must be readily legible. The type size used must conform to all four requirements. Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the application; consequently, the use of small type will be grounds for the Institute to return the application without peer review. Adherence

to type size and line spacing requirements is also necessary so that no applicant will have an unfair advantage, by using small type, or providing more text in their applications.

Note, these requirements apply to the PDF file as submitted. As a practical matter, applicants who use a 12 point Times New Roman without compressing, kerning, condensing or other alterations typically meet these requirements.

Use only black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. The application must contain only material that reproduces well when photocopied in black and white.

The 20-page limit does *not* apply to the ED 424 form, the one-page abstract, the ED 524 form and budget narrative justification, the curriculum vitae, or reference list. Reviewers are able to conduct the highest quality review when applications are concise and easy to read, with pages numbered consecutively.

- f. *Reference list.* Please include complete citations, including titles and all authors, for literature cited in the research narrative.
- g. *Brief curriculum vita of key personnel.* Abbreviated curriculum vita should be provided for the principal investigator(s) and other key personnel. *Each vitae is limited to 3 pages and should include information sufficient to demonstrate that personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their duties (e.g., publications, grants, relevant research experience).* The curriculum vita must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in the research narrative section.
- h. *Budget justification.* The *budget justification* must provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project. It must include the time commitments and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel. *The budget justification should correspond to the itemized breakdown of project costs that is provided in Section C.* For consultants, the narrative should include the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs. A justification for equipment purchase, supplies, travel and other related project costs should also be provided in the budget narrative for each project year outlined in Section C. For applications that include contracts for work conducted at collaborating institutions, applicants should submit an itemized budget spreadsheet for each contract for each project year, and the details of the contract costs should be included in the budget narrative. University researchers should use their institution's federal indirect cost rate and use the off-campus indirect cost rate where appropriate (see instructions under Section 9 Special Requirements). If less than 75 percent of total indirect costs are based on application of the off-campus rate, the applicant must provide a detailed justification.
- i. *Appendix A.* In *Appendix A*, the applicant may include any figures, charts, or tables that supplement the research text, and letters of agreement from partners (e.g., schools) and consultants. Letters of agreement should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and

resources to the research project that will be required if the application is funded. The appendix is limited to 15 pages.

- j. *Appendix B* (optional). Applicants may include in *Appendix B* up to 10 pages of examples of curriculum material, computer screens, or further description of the intervention.

Please note that applicants selected for funding will be required to submit the following certifications and assurances before a grant is issued:

- (1) SF 424B-Assurances-Non-Construction Programs
- (2) ED-80-0013-Certification Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements
- (3) ED 80-0014 (if applicable)-Lower Tier Certification
- (4) SF-LLL (if applicable) - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- (5) Protection of Human Research Subjects assurance and/or Institutional Review Board certification, as appropriate

13. APPLICATION PROCESSING

Applications must be received by **8:00 p.m. Eastern time** on the application receipt date listed in the heading of this request for applications. Upon receipt, each application will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this request for applications. Applications that do not address specific requirements of this request will be returned to the applicants without further consideration.

14. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Applications that are complete and responsive to this request will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below by a panel of scientists who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and request for applications.

Each application will be assigned to at least two primary reviewers who will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, an average overall score for each application will be calculated and a preliminary rank order of applications prepared before the full peer review panel convenes to complete the review of applications.

The full panel will consider only those applications deemed to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order, generally the top 25 to 30, and the most competitive proposals will be discussed and scored. A panel member may nominate for consideration by the full panel any proposal that he or she believes merits full panel review but would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

15. REVIEW CRITERIA FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT

The goal of Institute-supported research is to contribute to the solution of education problems and to provide reliable information about the education practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to education for all students. Reviewers will be expected to assess the following aspects of an application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed evaluation will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of that goal. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is also described above in the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research and in the description of the evaluation narrative, which appears in the section on Contents and Page Limits of Application.

- Significance Does the applicant make a compelling case for the potential contribution of the project to the solution of an education problem?
- Evaluation Plan Does the applicant present (a) a strong rationale for the project; (b) clear evaluation questions; (c) clear descriptions of and strong rationales for the sample, the measures, data collection procedures, and evaluation design; and (d) a detailed and well-justified data analysis plan? Does the evaluation plan meet the requirements described in the section on the Requirements of the Proposed Research and in the description of the research narrative in the section on Contents and Page Limits? Is the evaluation plan appropriate for answering the evaluation questions?
- Personnel Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the principal investigator, project director, and other key personnel possess the training and experience and will commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed evaluation?
- Resources Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed activities? Do the commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project?

16. RECEIPT AND REVIEW SCHEDULE

Letter of Intent Receipt Date: October 15, 2004

Application Receipt Date: December 16, 2004, 8:00 p.m. Eastern time

Earliest Anticipated Start Date: June 1, 2005

17. AWARD DECISIONS

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

Scientific merit

Responsiveness to the requirements of this request

Performance and use of funds under a previous Federal award

Contribution to the overall program of research described in this request

Availability of funds

18. INQUIRIES MAY BE SENT TO:

Dr. Stefanie Schmidt

Institute of Education Sciences
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208

Email: Stefanie.Schmidt@ed.gov
Telephone: (202) 219-2129

19. PROGRAM AUTHORITY

20 U.S.C. 9501 et seq., the “Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002,” Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 77, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86 (part 86 applies only to institutions of higher education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.101(b), 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.211, 75.217, 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, and 75.230.